

Spectrum

Marines begin 19 day tribute run

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Cpl. Jason Dunham was Staff Sgt. Ryan Pippin's basketball buddy in Iraq.

"Every day, we played basketball. Then one day, he didn't come back from patrol," said Pippin, who will run a lap around Barton Field during the fourth annual Tribute to the Fallen, which began Sunday with a brief ceremony.

Dunham was the first Marine to receive the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War. President George W. Bush awarded it to him two years after his death. He used his Kevlar helmet and body to shield fellow Marines from a grenade blast in April 2004.

More than 100 Marines and some Navy service members will run continuously during the 19-day event to remember the 1,090 Marine and Navy corpsmen who've died in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom since fighting began in March 2003. In all, they will cover more than 3,100 miles.

Pippin will run in memory of six people.

Chief Petty Officer Joe Obleton and Chief Petty Officer Suzanne Fowler-Tutt will represent the Navy side for most of the event.

Obleton said he will run most laps in the wee hours of the morning so it doesn't interfere with his Navy duties. He has a few laps at 1:24 a.m.

(Right) Marine Pfc. Edward Byrd, the first runner and a student assigned to the U.S. Marine Corps Detachment at Fort Gordon, hands off the pouch of rounds to the second runner, Staff Sgt. Roddy McDowell, the administrative chief for the detachment, during the opening ceremony of the Tribute to the Fallen held Oct. 19 at Barton Field.

"I'm running for one of my sailors," Obleton said.

Petty Officer 1st Class Carrie McElveen was serving with Obleton when her husband, Marine Cpl. Anthony McElveen, was killed on Dec. 1, 2005. Obleton will run about 15 laps, he said.

Gunnery Sgt. James Meek, now retired, started the event and coordinated the first three.

"It's nice seeing it continue on with a new spin," said Meek.

Army personnel are also taking part in the run.

During the opening ceremony, a pouch containing rounds, which will be fired during the closing ceremony, were given to the first runner, Pfc. Edward Byrd. The rounds will be passed from runner to runner.

The closing ceremony is 3 p.m., Nov. 7.



Photos by Bonnie Heater



(Above) Navy Chief Petty Officer Joseph Obleton and Petty Officer 1st Class Leota Phillips of the Fort Gordon Navy and Marine Corps Choir sing the national anthem prior to the kick off of the Tribute to the Fallen Run. Obleton and Chief Petty Officer Suzanne Fowler-Tutt, who also attended, will be among the Sailors representing the Navy in the Tribute to the Fallen. **(Below)** Air Force Master Sgt. Pam McMorrow, first sergeant for the 139th Intelligence Squadron at Fort Gordon, tearfully extends best wishes to the young Marines.



(Above) Military motorcycle group veterans from the American League Riders, Post 178 of Augusta and Post 192 of Evans, Ga.; U.S. Military Veterans; and Chapter 2371 of Augusta's Harley Owners Group rode out to the post Oct. 19 to show their support for the Marines and Sailors participating in the fourth annual Tribute to the Fallen Run.



(Above) Marines congratulate Pfc. Edward Byrd after he completed the first lap of the Tribute to the Fallen Run. **(Left)** Alex Pruett, age 11, the son of Kelly and Spc. Charles Pruett, assigned to Company A, 551st Signal Battalion, offers a salute to Byrd after he completed the first 3.2-mile lap of the run. An individual will be running on Barton Field around the clock everyday until Nov. 7. In previous years, the final lap has included a formation of service members from all branches of service. Everyone is welcome to run or walk during the Tribute to the Fallen in honor of someone who has died during Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom. The closing ceremony will be held 3 p.m. Nov. 7 on Barton Field. The public is welcome to attend.